

*Vladimir Cloyevsky*  
**THE TOWN  
IN THE SNUFF-BOX  
OLD FATHER FROST**



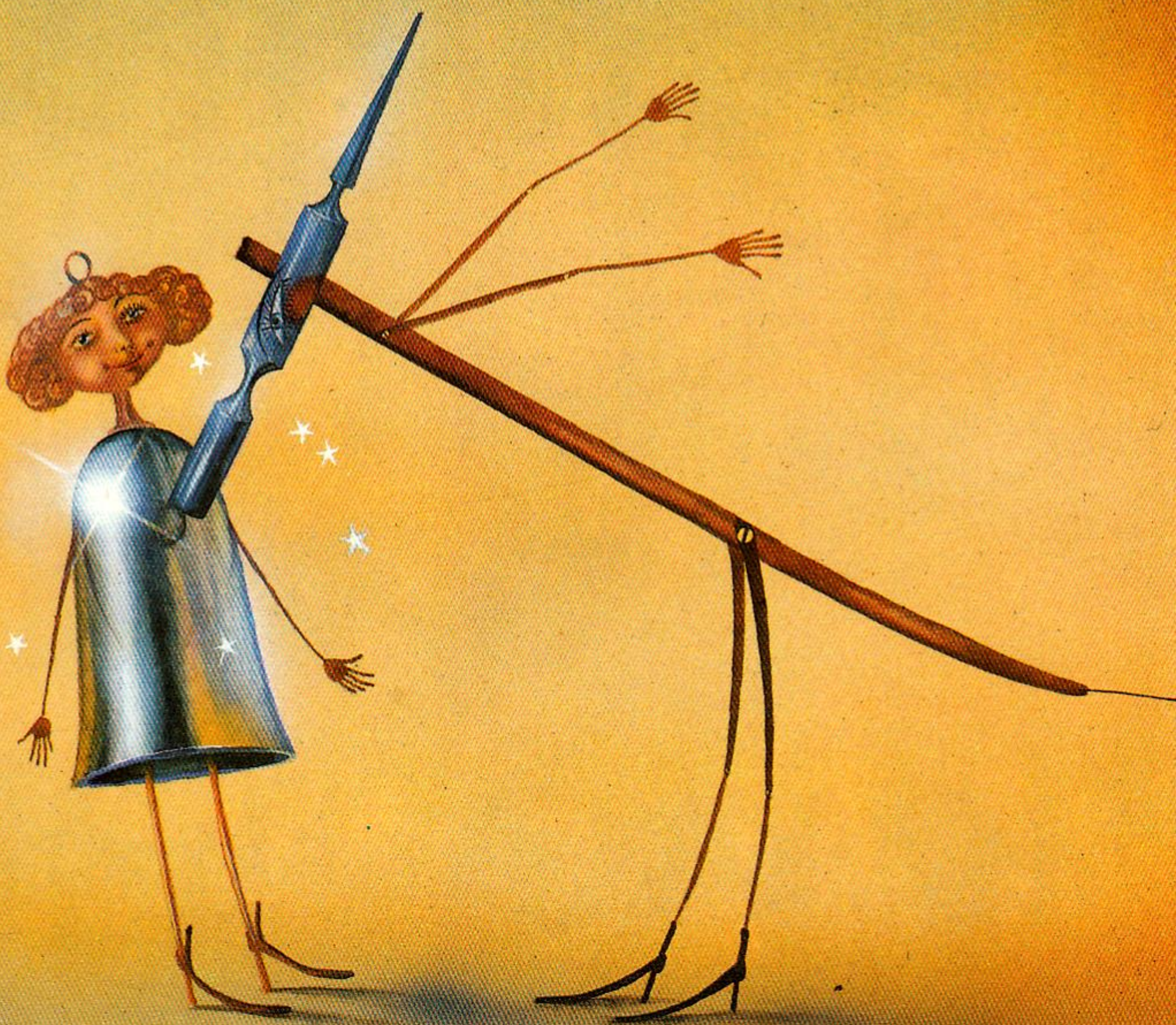














*Vladimir Odoyevsky*

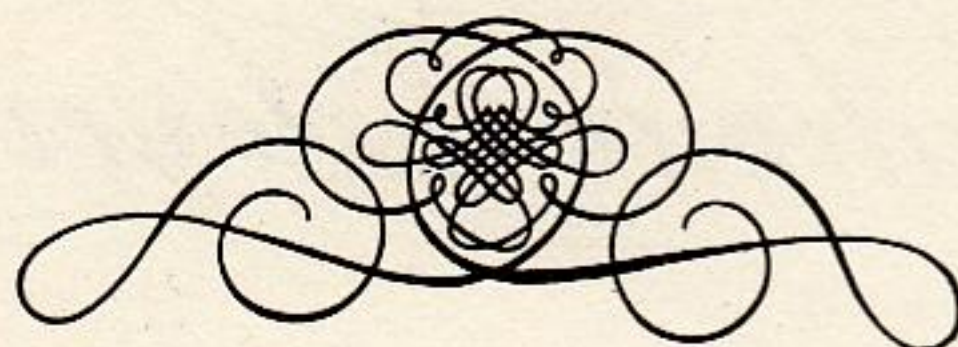
**THE TOWN  
IN THE SNUFF-BOX  
•  
OLD FATHER  
FROST**

Drawings by *Alexander Koshkin*  
*Natalia Polyanskaya*

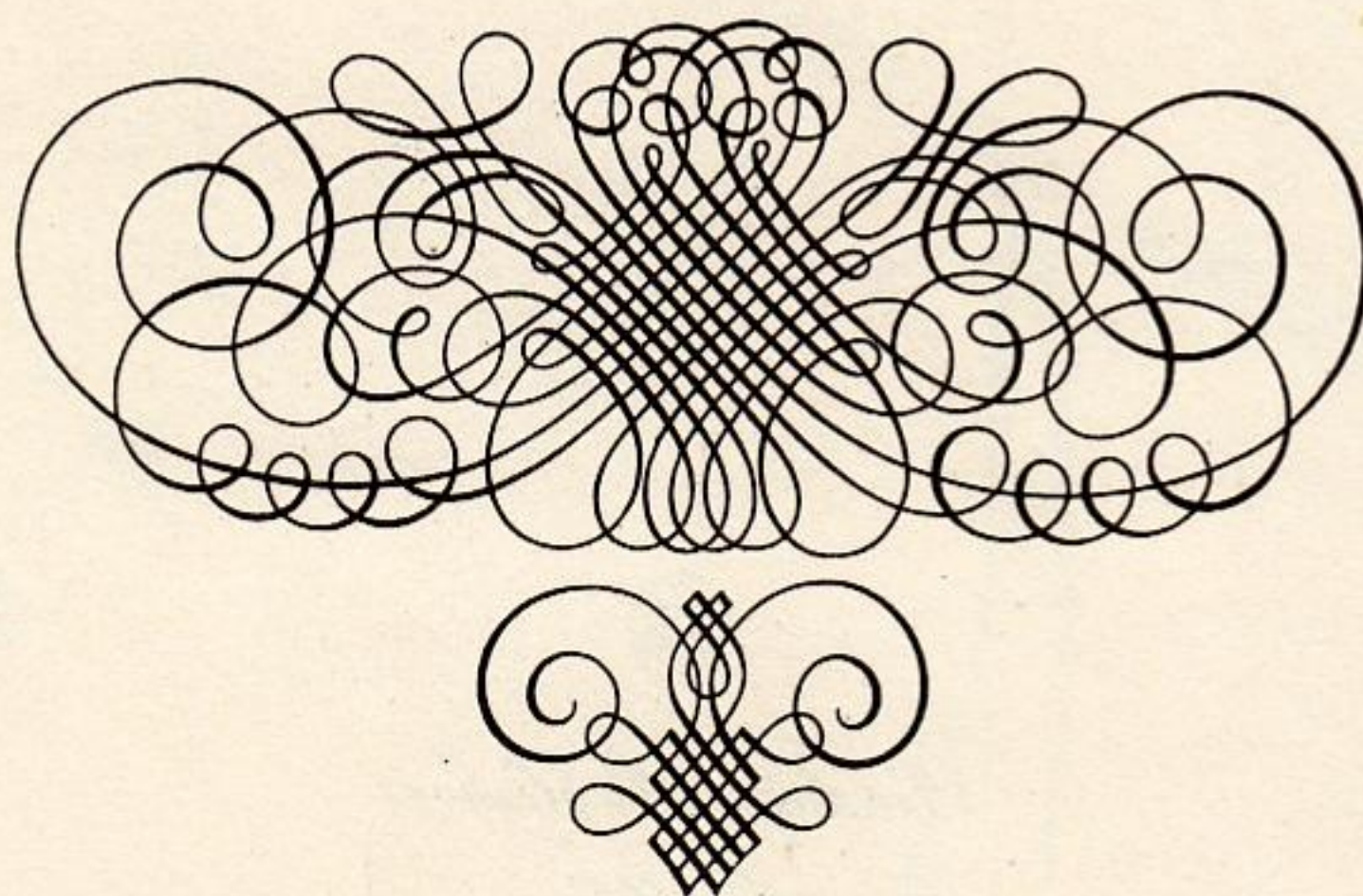


*Raduga Publishers*  
*Moscow*





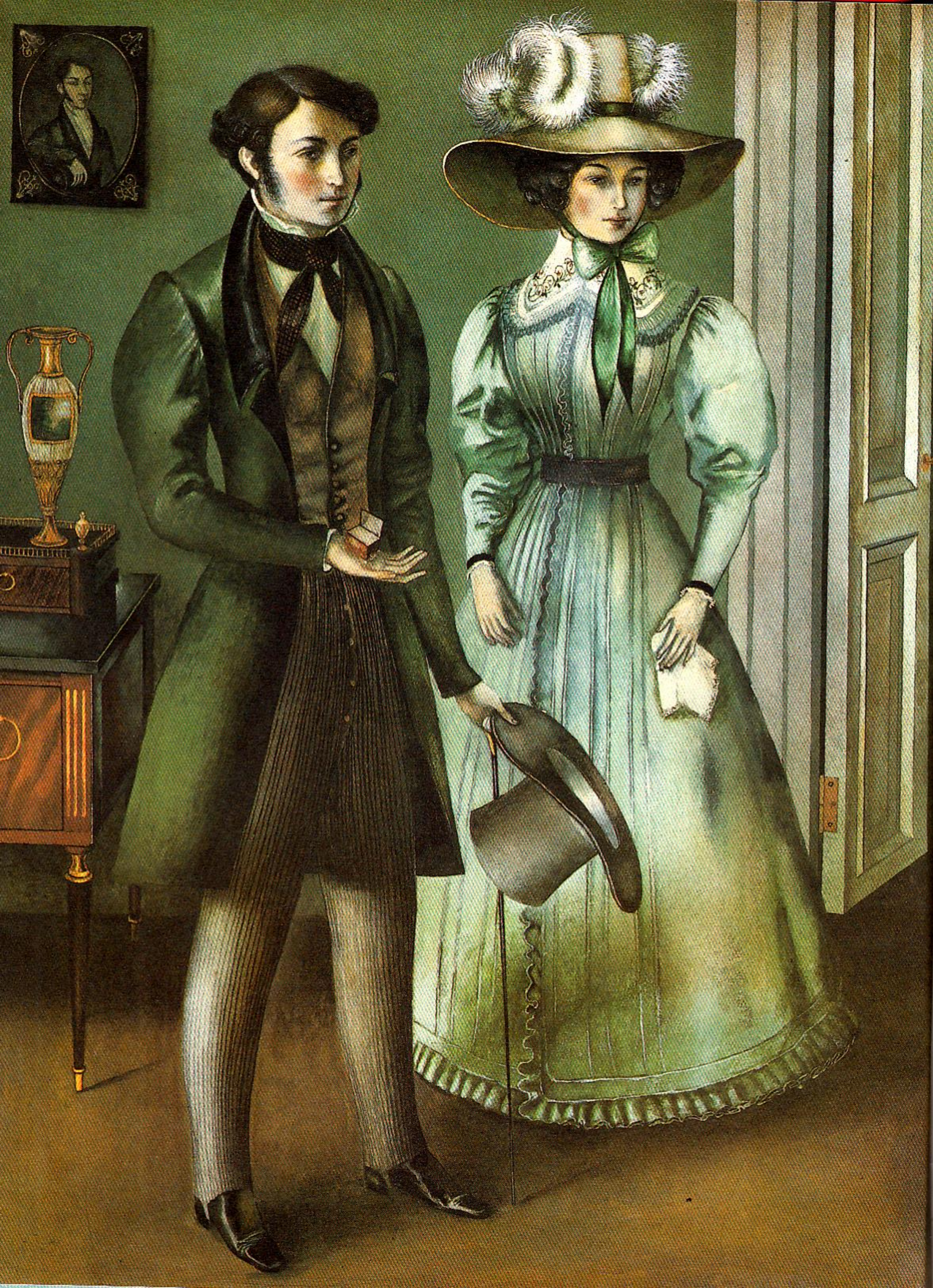
*A contemporary of Pushkin and Gogol,  
the well-known Russian Prince Vladimir Odoyevsky (1804–1869)  
is the author of many works,  
including some extremely popular tales for children.  
Here are two of them, the delightful title story about Misha's  
adventures with a musical snuff-box,  
and "Old Father Frost",  
also highly entertaining and instructive.*













# THE TOWN IN THE SNUFF-BOX

Papa placed the snuff-box on the table. "Come and look at this, Misha," he said.

Misha was an obedient little boy; he left his toys at once and trotted up to Papa. It was well worth a look! What a splendid snuff-box! Made of gay tortoise-shell. And see what was on the lid! Gates, turrets and lots of tiny houses, each smaller than the one before, and all made of gold. The trees were of gold, too, with silver leaves. And behind the trees rose the sun, its pink beams spreading right across the sky.

"What town is it?" Misha asked.

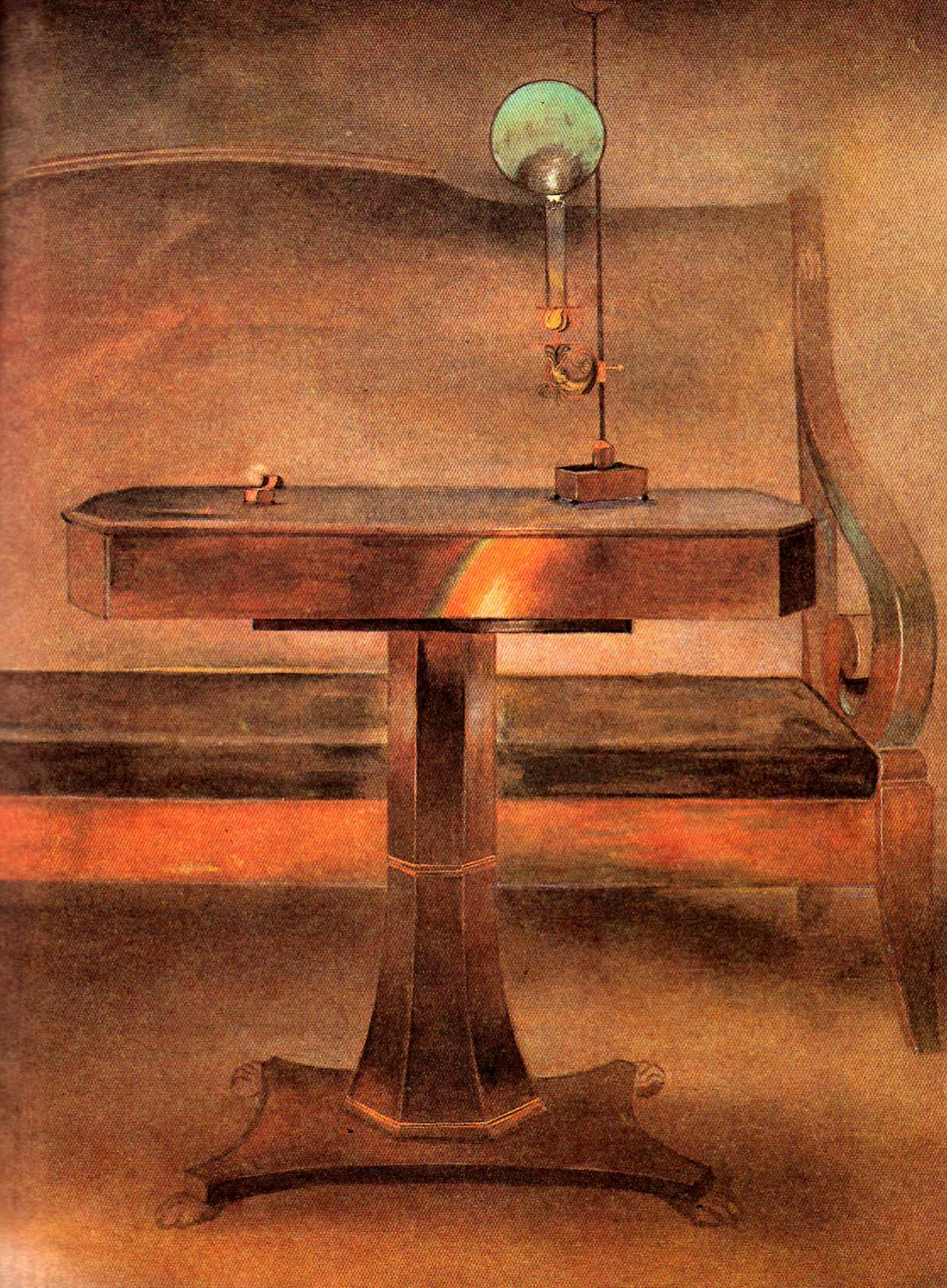
"It is the town of Ting-a-ling," Papa replied, touching a spring...

And then guess what? Suddenly music began to play. Misha could not tell where it was coming from. He went over to the door—was it from the other room? Then to the clock—perhaps it was inside the clock? Then to the bureau, and the cabinet. He listened here, he listened there. He even peeped under the table. In the end Misha decided that the music was playing in the snuff-box. He went over to it; he saw the sun rise from behind the trees and steal quietly over the sky, as the sky and the town grew lighter. The windows shone brightly and the turrets seemed to glow. Then the sun crossed the sky to the other side and went slowly down until it finally disappeared behind a little hill. The town grew dark, the shutters closed, and the turrets faded, but not for long. A star lit up, then another, a crescent moon peeped out from the trees, and the town grew bright again, the windows gleamed with silver, and the turrets shone with a bluish light.











"Papa! Papa! Can I go into the town? I want to so much!"

"How can you, my boy? The town is not big enough."

"That doesn't matter, Papa. I'm very small. Do let me go. I'd love to know what it's like in there..."

"It's full without you, my boy."

"But who lives there?"

"Who lives there? The little bells."

So saying Papa lifted the lid of the snuff-box, and what do you think Misha saw? Lots of little bells, hammers, a cylinder, and wheels. Misha was surprised.

"What are the little bells for? And the hammers? And the cylinder with the hooks?" Misha asked Papa.

And Papa replied:

"I won't tell you, Misha; you have a good look and think hard. Perhaps you will be able to guess. Only don't touch this spring or everything will break."

Papa went out of the room, and Misha was left with the snuff-box. He stared at it carefully for a long time wondering what made the bells ring.

The music went on playing, but gradually grew quieter, as if something were clinging to each note, pushing each sound away from the one before. Then Misha saw: a little door opened at the bottom of the snuff-box and out ran a golden-headed boy in a silver skirt. He stopped on the threshold and beckoned to Misha.

"Why did Papa say the town was full enough without me?" thought Misha. "The people who live there must be nice, look, they're inviting me to visit them."

"Oh, thank you! I'd love to come!"

Misha ran to the door and noted with surprise that it was exactly his height. As a well-mannered little boy, he felt obliged to address his escort.

"Kindly tell me," Misha said, "with whom I have the honour of speaking."

"Ting-a-ling," the stranger replied, "I am a boy bell who lives in this town. We heard that you wanted to visit us, so we decided to invite you to be our guest. Ting-a-ling, ting-a-ling!"

Misha bowed courteously. The boy bell took him by the hand, and off they went. Then Misha looked up and saw a vault made of pretty embossed paper with golden edges. In front of them was another vault, only smaller. Then a third, smaller still, a fourth, smaller than the third, and











so on. The further away, the smaller they became, and the last one seemed hardly big enough for the tiny head of his escort.

"I am very grateful to you for your invitation," Misha said to him, "but I don't know whether I can accept it. I can get through here easily enough, but look at those low vaults further on. I tell you quite honestly I couldn't get through them even if I crawled. I am surprised that you can."

"Ting-a-ling!" the boy replied. "Come along. Don't worry, just follow me."

Misha did as he was told. And indeed, with each step the vaults seemed to get higher, and the boys passed through easily. When they reached the last vault, the boy bell asked Misha to look back. Misha did so, and what did he see? The first vault, under which he had passed when he came in, now looked very small, as if it had shrunk while they were walking. Misha was very surprised.

"How did that happen?" he asked his escort.

"Ting-a-ling!" his escort replied, laughing. "Things always look like that from a distance. It's obvious that you have never observed anything carefully from a distance. From a distance things always look small, but as you draw nearer they get bigger."

"Yes, that's true," Misha replied. "I'd never thought about it before. That explains what happened to me the other day. I wanted to draw Mama playing the piano next to me, and Papa reading a book at the other end of the room. But I just couldn't get it right: I tried ever so hard, drawing as carefully as I could, but I kept getting Papa next to Mama and his armchair next to the piano, although I could see perfectly well that the piano was near me by the window, and Papa was sitting at the other end of the room, by the fireplace. Mama told me that I should draw Papa small, and I thought she was joking, because Papa is much taller than her; but now I see that Mama was right. I should have drawn Papa small, because he was sitting further away. Thank you so much for explaining it to me."

The boy bell laughed with all his might: "Ting-a-ling, what a funny thing! Ting-a-ling, what a funny thing! Not to be able to draw Papa and Mama! Ting-a-ling, ting-a-ling!"

Misha was annoyed at the boy bell laughing at him so pitilessly and said to him very politely:

"If you don't mind me asking, why do you say 'ting-a-ling' all the time?"











"It's a catchword of ours," the boy bell replied.

"A catchword?" Misha remarked. "Well, my Papa says it isn't good to use catchwords all the time."

The boy bell bit his lips and did not utter another word.

Ahead were more doors. They opened, and Misha found himself in a street. What a street! What a town! The streets were paved with mother-of-pearl. The sky was gay tortoise-shell and across it moved a gold sun. If you beckoned to the sun, it left the sky, danced round your hand, then went back again. The tiny houses were made of polished steel with roofs of coloured shells, and under each roof sat a golden-headed boy bell in a silver skirt, lots and lots of them, each smaller than the one before.

"I won't be deceived now," said Misha. "It only looks like that from a distance. The bells are really all the same size."

"No, you're wrong," his escort replied. "The bells are not all the same size. If we were all the same size, we would all give the same ring, one like the next; but can't you hear the songs we make? That is because the bigger ones have a deeper voice. Didn't you know that? That will teach you a lesson, Misha. In future do not laugh at people who use catchwords; sometimes such a person knows more than others, and you can learn something from him."

It was Misha's turn to bite his tongue.

Meanwhile they had been surrounded by boy bells, who plucked at Misha's clothes, tinkled, jumped and ran about.

"You do have a jolly time," Misha said to them. "I should like to stay with you forever: you don't do anything all day: you have no lessons and no teacher, just music all day."

"Ting-a-ling!" cried the bells. "So you think we have a jolly time! No, Misha, our life is not a happy one. It's true that we have no lessons, but what's so good about that? We wouldn't mind having lessons! Our trouble is that we have nothing to do. We have no books, no pictures, no father or mother, nothing to occupy us. We just play and play all day, Misha, and that is very, very boring. Don't you believe us? Our tortoise-shell sky is very fine, and the sun and the gold trees. But we've had enough of them, we're bored by it all. We never take a step out of the town. Just imagine what it's like to stay in a snuff-box all the time, doing nothing, even if it is a musical snuff-box."

"Yes," Misha replied, "you are right. That happens to me too. When you start playing with your toys after lessons it is very nice. But when you











play all day long, it gets boring by the evening. You pick up this toy, then that, and none of them are any fun. I couldn't understand why that happened, but I see now."

"Yes, and what's more we have another worry, Misha: our masters."

"What masters?" Misha asked.

"The hammers," the bells replied. "They're so nasty! Always strutting round the town and hitting us. The bigger bells don't get hit so much, but the little ones are biffed all the time."

And indeed Misha saw some gentlemen with thin legs and long noses strutting along the street, whispering to themselves: "Biff-biff-biff! Biff-biff-biff! Lift up! Hook on! Biff-biff-biff!"

The hammers really were biffing the bells all the time, first this one, then that, and even poor Misha felt sorry for them. He went up to the gentlemen, greeted them very courteously, and asked politely why they were hitting the poor boys so pitilessly. But the hammers replied:

"Be off with you. Leave us alone! See the overseer lying down over there in his dressing gown? He's the one who makes us hit them. He turns over and hooks us, turns over and hooks us. Biff-biff-biff! Biff-biff-biff!"

"Who is your overseer?" Misha asked the bells.

"Mister Cylinder," they tinkled. "He's a very kind man, who lies on the sofa day or night. We can't complain about him."

Misha went to the overseer. He really was lying on a sofa in his dressing gown tossing from side to side, but always with his face upwards. His dressing gown was studded with hundreds of little pins and hooks. Whenever a hammer appeared he would hook it, then let go, making the hammer hit a bell.

As soon as Misha came up, the overseer cried:

"Hanky-panky! Who's that walking? Who's that talking? Hanky-panky! Who refuses to go away? Who won't let me sleep all day? Hanky-panky, hanky-panky!"

"It's me," Misha replied, bravely, "I'm Misha..."

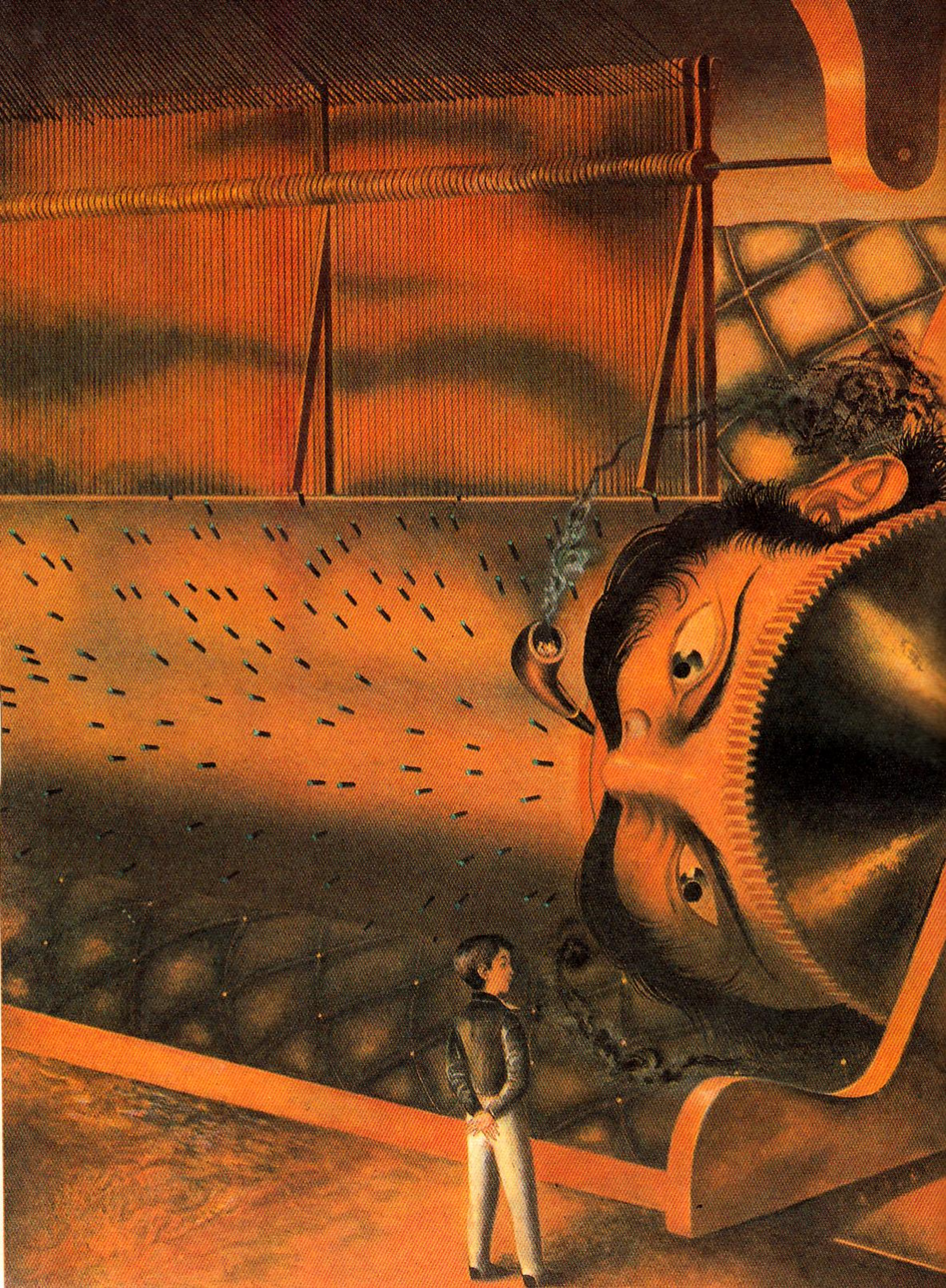
"And what do you want, pray?" asked the overseer.

"I'm sorry for the poor bell boys. They are so clever, and so kind, and so musical, but you make the hammers hit them all the time..."

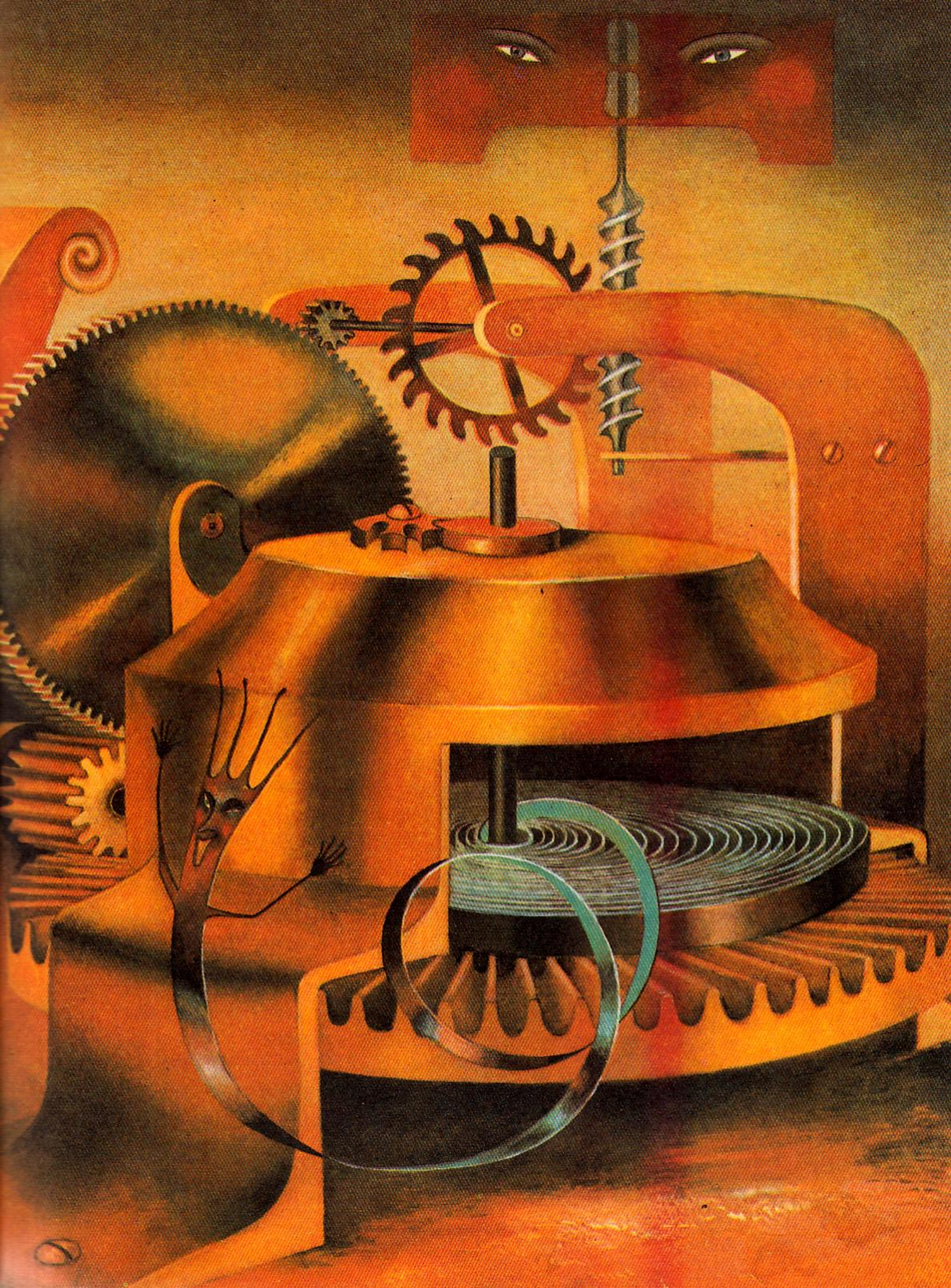
"What's that got to do with me, hanky-panky! I'm not the boss here. Let the hammers hit the boys! What do I care! I'm a kind overseer, I just lie on the sofa and don't watch anyone. Hanky-panky, hanky-panky..."

"Well, I have learnt a lot in this town!" Misha said to himself. "Some-











times I get annoyed because the form-master always keeps an eye on me. 'The horrid man!' I think. 'After all, he's not my Papa or Mama; what does it matter to him if I am naughty? Why doesn't he just stay in his own room?' Now I can see what happens to poor boys when no one keeps an eye on them."

Meanwhile Misha walked on, then stopped. In front of him was a gold tent fringed with pearls. On top a gold weather-vane turned like a wind-mill, and under the canopy lay Queen Spring, like a snake, coiling and uncoiling, forever prodding the overseer in the side. Misha was very surprised at this and asked her:

"Why do you keep prodding the overseer in the side, your Majesty?"

"Zing-zing-zing," the Queen replied. "You're a silly little thing! You look at everything and see nothing! If I did not prod the cylinder, the cylinder would not go round; and if the cylinder did not go round, it would not hook the hammers, and the hammers would not strike the bells; and if the hammers did not strike, the bells would not ring; and if the bells did not ring, there would be no music! Zing-zing-zing."

Misha wanted to find out if the Queen was telling the truth. He bent over and pressed her with his finger—and then what do you think happened? In a flash the spring uncoiled, the cylinder spun round, the hammers struck wildly, the little bells began to ring madly and the spring snapped. Everything went quiet, the cylinder stopped, the hammers fell down, the bells swung to one side, the sun hung still, the houses fell to pieces... Then Misha remembered that Papa had told him not to touch the spring. He got frightened and ... woke up.

"What were you dreaming about, Misha?" asked Papa.

For a long time Misha did not realise what had happened. He looked around—it was Papa's room. There in front of him was the snuff-box. Papa and Mama were sitting next to him, laughing.

"Where is the bell boy? And the hammer master? And Queen Spring?" Misha asked. "So it was all a dream, was it?"

"Yes, Misha, the music lulled you to sleep, and you dozed here for quite a while. Do at least tell us about your dream."

"Well, you see, Papa," Misha said, rubbing his eyes, "I wanted to find out what made the music play in the snuff-box. So I looked at it carefully and tried to work out what moved and why. I was just beginning to understand it, when I saw the door in the snuff-box open..." And Misha described his dream all in the right order.





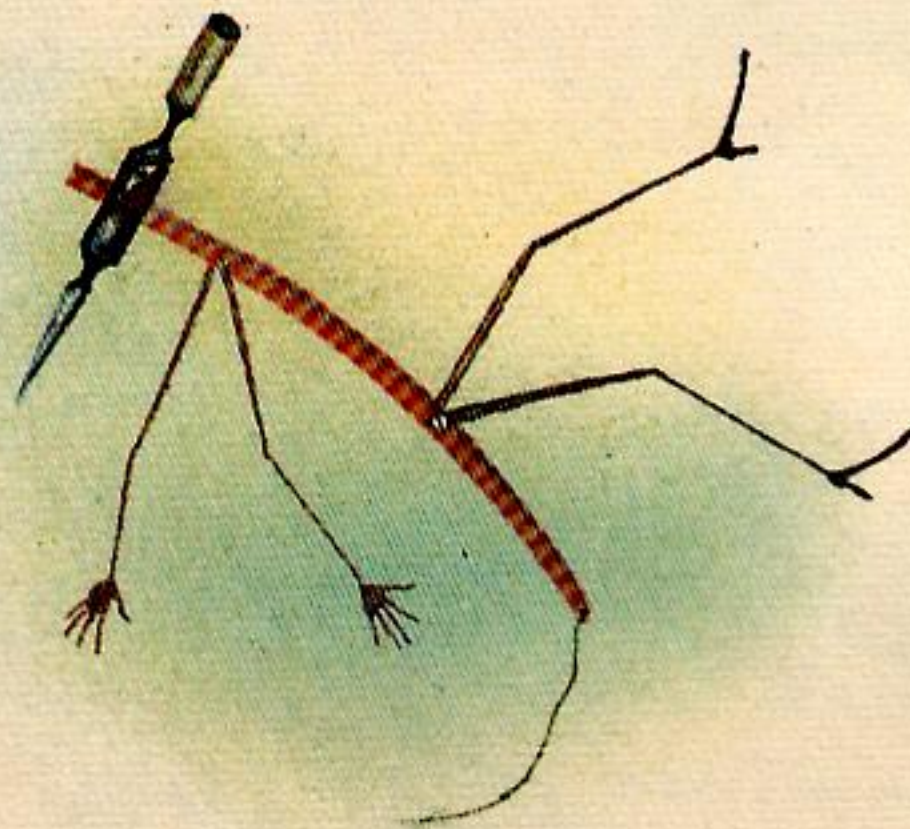






“Well, I can see that you really did almost find out what makes the music play in the snuff-box,” said Papa. “But you will understand it even better when you study mechanics.”

Translated by *K. M. Cook-Horujy*









# OLD FATHER FROST

Long, long ago, two little girls lived together with their Nanny in a pretty wooden cottage. One of them the village folk called Busybee and the other Lazybones on account of ... well, you may readily guess.

Busybee was a clever girl: she rose at daybreak, dressed herself (without Nanny's aid) and set about her chores forthwith: she stoked the stove, mixed the batter, swept the cottage, fed the cock and fetched water from the well.

Lazybones meantime was a veritable layabed: she would stretch and yawn, toss and turn and, when finally bored with lying in bed, she would call in a drowsy voice,

"Nanny, pull on my stockings, tie up my laces!"

By and by, she would call again,

"Nanny, I want a honey-cake."

When at last she did get up, she would sit on the window-ledge and count flies: how many settled on the window-pane, how many flew away. Once she had counted all the flies, she was lost for what to do. Should she go back to bed? But she wasn't sleepy ... Should she eat her honey-cake? But she wasn't hungry. Should she count the flies once more? No, she was fed up with that ... So she just moped, spilling tears and complaining about her lot—as if everyone was at fault but herself.

Presently, Busybee would return with her pail of water. What a hard-working girl she was, to be sure! If the water was unclean, she would fold a piece of paper into a cone, tip coarse grains of sand and bits of charcoal



into it, fit the cone into the neck of a pitcher and pour in the water. Thus, the water would trickle into the pitcher as crystal-clear as a mountain stream.

That done, she would set to knitting stockings or hemming hankies, or she would cut and sew a blouse—all the while humming a merry tune to herself. Since she had no time to pause and ponder, she knew no boredom throughout the livelong day. So the day buzzed busily by and lo! before she knew it, dusk had drawn its veil upon another day's work.

One time, however, misfortune befell poor Busybee. She had gone to the well as usual for water, lowered her pail down the shaft when ... oh dear! That old rope snapped, plunging her only pail into the depths of the well. Nanny Praskovya was very cross and grumpy when she heard about the mishap. And she told Busybee,

"No need to wail, yours is the plight,  
You lost the pail, yours to put right!"

There was nothing for it. Poor Busybee returned to the well, took hold of the rope and lowered herself down, down ... down to the very bottom. And there a surprise awaited her. For barely had her feet touched the bottom than a stove appeared with a pie in it—such a crusty, tasty pie; it sat there, winked at her and mumbled,

"I'm altogether done, baked to a turn,  
Sugared and spiced and ready to burn;  
Whosoever takes me from the glow  
Must follow me wherever I go."

Without more ado, Busybee took the wooden shovel, scooped up the pie and thrust it into her pocket.

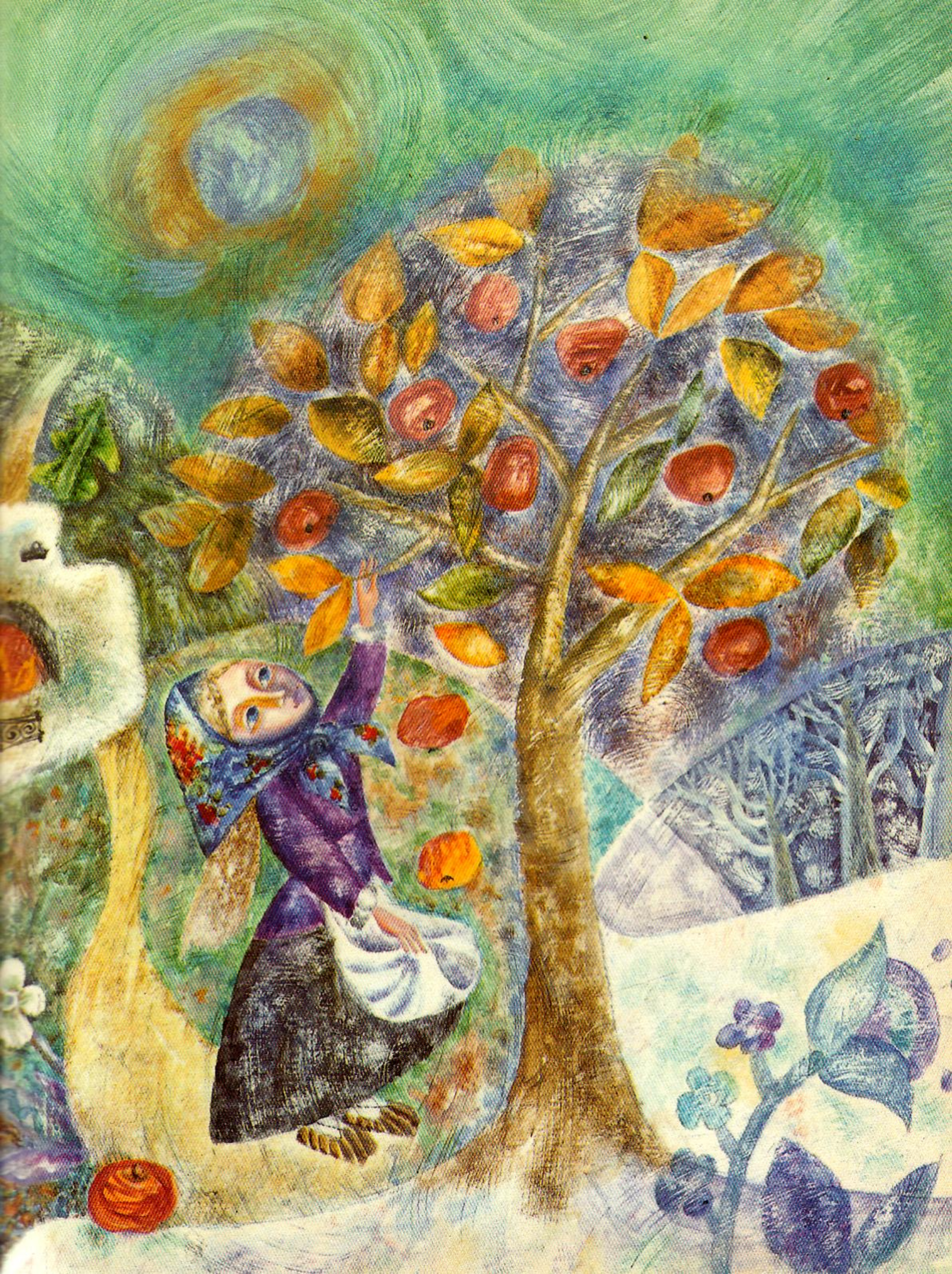
On she went. Before her now stretched a garden and in it she saw a tree, and on that tree hung golden apples, rustling their apple-green leaves as they whispered,

"We apples, ripe and juicy, were nourished by the tree roots and bathed in well-spring dew; whosoever shakes us free shall go with us a sight to see."

She went up to the tree, shook a branch and down tumbled golden apples into her pinafore.

She walked on. Then stopped in alarm; for there before her sat Old







Father Frost, as grizzled and grey as grizzled and grey can be. He was sitting on a bench of ice munching lumps of snow. When he shook his great big head, hoar-frost showered from his hair; and when he breathed out, a thick mist developed from his mouth. On spying Busybee, he boomed,

"Ah-ha, welcome, my pretty one! Thank you for bringing me a pie; it's many a long day since I ate something hot."

Thereupon, he sat Busybee beside him and together they ate the pie and the golden apples.

"I mark well why you are here," said Old Father Frost. "You lost your pail in my well. Fear not, I shall return it. But on the condition: you shall serve me for three days and nights. Be you smart, more's the good; be you lazy, more's the pity. Now it's time for this old fellow to rest his weary bones; go and prepare my bed ... and mind you give the featherbed a good shake."

She did as she was told. She went with Father Frost into his house built entirely of ice: the doors and windows and floor were made of ice, and the walls were adorned with starry snowflakes that glittered in the wintry sunshine. Everything sparkled like diamonds. A thick layer of fluffy snow lay on Old Father Frost's bed, and it was icy cold to touch.

Still, Busybee whisked up the snow until it was soft and fluffy—to make the old man's bed as cosy as she could. Her hands became stiff with cold, her thin fingers turning frosty white—like those of poor folk who rinse their washing in an ice-hole in deepest winter: the water is chilling, the wind is mean and biting, the washing freezes hard—but the job must be done.

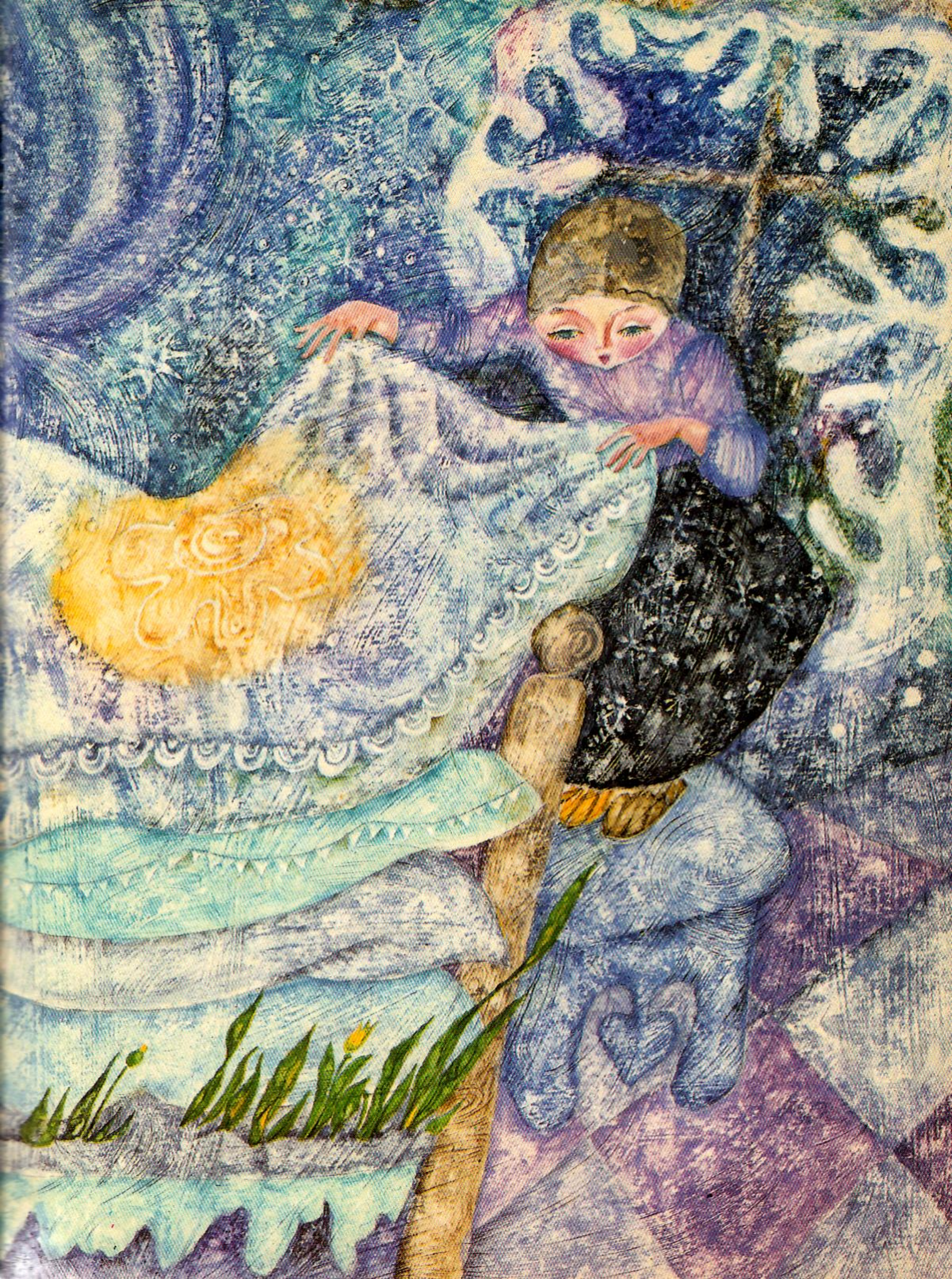
"You are a brave girl," said Old Father Frost kindly. "Rub your fingers with snow and they'll be warm and nimble once again. You see, I am really a kind old man; come hither and behold my treasure."

So saying, he lifted the snowy canopy from his bed, and there was tender green grass pushing its way up underneath.

Busybee felt sorry for the grass.

"You say you are kind," she said, "yet why do you keep the green grass under your snowy featherbed? Why not let it see the light of day?"







"It is too early," gravely he replied. "The grass is not strong enough. The peasants sowed the seeds in autumn and they have sprouted, but were I to let the grass out today, the cold would nip it and it would not ripe in the summer. So I am sheltering the frail greenshoots beneath my snowy featherbed, lying down upon it so that the wind should not sweep the snow away. When spring comes, my snowy featherbed will melt, the grass will come to ear, the farmer will garner the grains of wheat and take them to the miller; the miller will grind the wheat into flour and from the flour you, Busybee, will bake bread."

"I see," said Busybee, sorry she had been cross with the kind old man. "But, tell me Father Frost, why do you sit in the well?"

"I feel hot as spring approaches," he replied. "You know how cool the well is in summer; the water remains cold even on the hottest summer's day."

"And why do you wander about the streets in winter, rattling at the windows?" she persisted.

"To remind folk to heat their stoves and shut up their chimneys in time. Because there are some who might forget to close the flue and it will get cold in the house and some will close the flue before all the wood has burnt to ashes and fumes will fill the house, and one might faint or even choke to death. And I rattle doors and knock on windows to remind folk that there are poor people who go cold in winter, who have no warm coats and no money to purchase firewood. They must not forget to help the poor."

Old Father Frost patted Busybee on the head and lay down upon his snowy bed.

As he slumbered, she bustled about the house tidying up; then she hurried to the kitchen to prepare a meal. That done, she mended the old man's cloak and darned his shirts and socks.

When Old Father Frost awoke, he beamed with pleasure, thanking the girl most warmly. Together they sat at the table to eat; the dinner was very good, especially the ice-cream which the old man had made himself.

Thus it was the three days sped by. At the end of the third day, Old Father Frost said,







"Most grateful I am to you, child, you are a good girl and have served me well. I shall repay your kindness. Nimble hands merit rich reward. So take your pail—I have filled it with a handful of silver coins; and here is a diamond brooch for you to pin your shawl together."

Busybee thanked the old man, pinned on her diamond brooch and took her pail. She returned to the well and climbed up the rope back into God's world.

As she approached her cottage, the cock she always fed saw her coming and flew up onto the fence, crowing,

"Cock-a-doodle-do! Cock-a-doodle-do!

Busybee has a pailful of coins and a diamond too."

At home, she recounted her adventures to her sister and Nanny. As her story came to an end, Nanny turned to Lazybones,

"There, you see what people get for being helpful," she said. "Why do you not go to the old man and serve him. Were you to work hard, tidy his room, cook his food, mend and darn his garments, you, too, might earn some silver coins."

Lazybones was not anxious to go. But the thought of a silver fortune and a diamond brooch excited her. And so, she went to the well, climbed down the rope to the very bottom and looked about her. There stood the stove with the pie, crusty and brown; it sat there, winked at her and mumbled,

"I'm altogether done, baked to a turn,  
Sugared and spiced and ready to burn;  
Whosoever takes me from the glow  
Must follow me wherever I go."

At which, Lazybones replied crossly,

"You'll have to burn then! I cannot be bothered to pick up the wooden shovel and lift you out; jump out yourself if you want to."

On she went. Entering the garden, she went up to the tree laden with golden apples that were rustling their apple-green leaves and whispering,

"We apples, ripe and juicy, were nourished by the tree roots and bathed in well-spring dew; whosoever shakes us free shall go with us a sight to see."

"Oh, shake yourselves!" grumbled Lazybones. "I cannot be bothered







to lift my arms to pull down your branches . . . I'll pick you up when you've fallen to the ground."

With that cross word, she passed the apples by. On she walked until she came to Old Father Frost. As before, the old man was seated on a bench of ice munching lumps of snow.

"What brings you here, girl?" he asked.

"I am here to serve you and be rewarded by you," she replied boldly.

"Sensibly said, my pretty one," answered the old man. "Work earns its own rewards; we shall have to see what you merit. Go into my house and shake up my featherbed; after that, make dinner, mend my cloak and darn my shirts and socks."

Off went Lazybones, thinking to herself,

"Why should I freeze my fingers on his snowy featherbed? Perhaps he won't notice and he'll go to sleep on an unmade bed . . ."

Indeed, the old man did not seem to take heed; he stretched himself out on the unmade bed and at once fell asleep. Meantime, Lazybones went into the kitchen. But . . . Goodness me! What was she to do? She was very fond of eating, but knew not how to cook even a thimbleful of porridge—she had been too lazy ever to learn. Laid out on a table waiting to be cooked were some greens, meat, fish, vinegar, mustard and milk. To save herself trouble, she took the whole lot and dumped it in a pot—unwashed and uncut: the greens, the meat, the fish, the mustard, the vinegar and even the milk.

"Why cook things separately?" she thought to herself. "It will all end up in our stomach anyway!"

It was not long before the old man awoke and called for his dinner. Lazybones brought in the pot, and did not even bother to lay the table.

Old Father Frost tasted the awful mess in the pot, frowned as he ground the grit in his teeth, and said with a wry smile,

"A fine potage you prepare; I wonder whether your other skills measure up to your cooking?"

Lazybones in the meantime tried a spoonful of the meal, but spat it out at once. By this time, the old man, mumbling and grumbling into his beard, had gone to cook another meal. So famous was his fare that Lazybones had two helpings and licked her fingers with relish.







After dining, the old man once more lay down to rest, reminding Lazybones that he had a cloak to be mended and socks to be darned.

The girl huffed and puffed, but there was nothing for it. She picked up the garments to see what needed mending. But no one had ever shown her how to sew—and she had never asked. She took up the needle but pricked her finger, and left the cloak unmended.

Once again, Old Father Frost did not scold her or even seem to heed her misdemeanour. Instead, he called her to supper and even tucked her up in bed afterwards.

“My sister was silly to make such a fuss of him,” Lazybones thought. “He’s such a kind and simple old soul, he will surely give me a pile of silver coins anyway.”

At the close of the third day, she came to Old Father Frost to claim her reward.

“But why should I reward you?” he asked in surprise. “To be fair, you should reward me, for I have served you, not you me!”

“But I have lived here with you for three full days,” cried Lazybones.

“See here, my pretty one,” replied the old man gravely. “There is a difference between living and serving. Mark that well. It may serve you in the future. All the same, I shall grant you a just reward, one that is equal to your work.”

With that, Old Father Frost presented her with a huge silver bar and an enormous diamond.

So overjoyed was she that, in her eagerness, she snatched up the silver and the diamond and rushed off home without so much as a thank-you to the old man.

Once home, she began to boast,

“See what I’ve earned! Far more than my sister: not a mere handful of coins or a tiny diamond—but a whole silver bar. Feel how heavy it is! And my diamond is larger than a human fist. It will buy me lots of furs and dresses.”

Yet, hardly had she finished speaking than the silver bar melted away, leaving a silvery pool upon the floor: it had been nothing more than mercury made solid by the cold! At the same moment, her diamond, too, began to melt.











Outside, upon the fence, the cock took up his post, crowing loudly,  
"Cock-a-doodle-do! Cock-a-doodle-do!  
Lazybones is home with a puddle or two."

\* \* \*

So you see, dear children, things are not always what they seem. In the end, only honest toil deserves its just reward. Old Father Frost knew that, didn't he?

Translated by *James Riordan*

THE END





Translation from the Russian

© Raduga Publishers 1990. Illustrated

*Printed in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics*

ISBN 5-05-002837-X















*Raduga Publishers*

